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GREAT PUBLIC QUESTIONS.

As a bachelor of fifty, given to solitary speculations upon men and things from the altitude of my two-pair back, and with leisure enough upon my hands to allow me to look at all things considerably and dispassionately, I possess more advantages for observation and reflection than every philosopher can boast of. I am not compelled to come to a conclusion upon every popular topic that turns up, before I have looked at both sides of it. When I find the morning paper, after Betty has aired it and hung it over the back of my chair, hammering away with the vigour of a Cyclops in favour of one particular course of proceeding, or set of men, and browbeating or bullying the other side, I am not under the necessity of letting myself be crammed with wind from the editor's force-pump, and exciting my nervous system in a disagreeable way. I can afford to let the matter rest awhile, and wait till that unprincipled faction has had its say in its turn, in the evening paper, or in to-morrow's; and then, if I choose, I can compare notes, and weigh one side against the other, and draw a conclusion, if it be worth while, which it generally is not.

It is wonderful what advantages I derive by the practice of this compensating system, and what a knowing old person I have the reputation of being, solely from adherence to so simple a plan. The beauty of it lies in the fact, that it enables you to clear off matters as you go, and reduces the amount of important material for judgment to the minimum point. A most surprising number of great public questions have I either settled outright, or shelved for future settlement, in the course of my time. I would name some of them, but that the catalogue might appear invidious, and give offence to many worthy people; and I am unwilling to be the cause of scandal to anybody in the columns of this peace-loving Journal. But—there are public questions of a kind which do not admit of being thus disposed of, for the simple reason that they are addressed point-blank to the reader personally—that there are no two sides about them, and that they call for a definite answer in a manner unmistakably plain and candid. These questions have weighed for a considerable time upon my mind, and I have observed latterly that they are growing more numerous, more pointed, more personal. Their notes of interrogation have stared me in the face at the breakfast-table, in my after-dinner chair, at the tea-table, any time for this twelvemonth; and yet I have never set eyes on a syllable in response. Can it be that they are all addressed to me individually, and

that the propounders are waiting for my answers all this while? If it should be so, how discourteous and unsympathising must I appear in their eyes by this time! Let me hasten to redeem my fault, and let my natural modesty stand in excuse for the slur which my neglect hitherto may have cast upon my character. I will answer your questions, O my persistently inquiring friends! as it becomes me to answer them, and to the best of my humble ability.

The first—because, according to the best of my recollection, it has the claim of longest standing—asks me rather curtly, ‘*Do you want luxuriant hair and whiskers?*’ I might object to this inquiry as a little too personal; but, waiving that, let me say that there was a time when I might have replied more feelingly to the interesting question—when I wanted no luxuriance either of hair or whiskers, but only the sanction of fashion to wear them. In the days of my pilous luxuriance, whiskers were remorselessly mown down as fast as they appeared; and now that all the world is cultivating them, my crop is not worth cultivation. The best I can do is to compromise the matter by a kind of half-shave, and pass muster as well as I may. As to my hair, Time has thinned it somewhat; but they tell me that, phrenologically, I look none the worse for that. So, with many thanks, my good friend, I will decline the luxuriant hair and whiskers.

Somebody has been asking pertinaciously for a long time past, ‘*Do you bruise your oats yet?*’ There is something suggestive and consolatory about the *yet*. At present, I am bound to say, I do not bruise my oats; and this is a painful confession, inasmuch as I have no oats to bruise. If I had been more sparing in the quantity which, with such pleasure, I sowed broadcast wherever I went thirty years ago, I might have had some left to bruise at this present moment. As it is, I have no horses to eat oats—*pauper et pedester sum*—I ride on Shank's naggie, or in my ‘Favourite’ ‘bus, when business calls me abroad. As yet, that is. I shall live in hopes, on the suggestion of my inquiring friend; and if he can put me in the way of becoming the proprietor of oats, and the etceteras implied when ‘your oats’ are spoken of, I will undertake to bruise them with all my heart, and on his peculiar principle.

Somebody else asks seriously, ‘*Do you double up your perambulators?*’ No, sir; but last Sunday-morning, as I was walking quietly to church, I was doubled up by a perambulator in a most shameful and scandalous manner. Whether the fat matron who propelled the abominable machine was an etymologist, and imagined that her *per*-ambulator was to walk clean through me, I don't know; but she drove the front-wheel right

between my legs, and I woke suddenly out of a reverie to find myself sprawling over a couple of gigantic babies. It was a providence that the twins were fat, fleshy, and soft, and that I escaped with a slight abrasion of the forehead. There used to be a law against driving wheel-carriages upon the trottoirs; I should like to know when it was repealed, or, if it never was repealed, why it is not put in force? Not a day of my life passes now but I am perambulated into the kennel or into an open shop, to avoid being upset. In other respects, I have nothing to do with perambulators, being a bachelor, and having no use for them. Nevertheless, I should have no objection to see them doubled up, once for all, in a way that would not at all gratify the inquirer, I fear.

A curious person asks, 'Where do you purchase fish?' Never going to market myself, I am obliged to ring the bell for my landlady, Mrs Jones, and propound this query to her. She tells me that fish of all sorts, from sprats to salmon, and from dried herring to salt cod, 'travels about the streets of London on men's heads, and calls at everybody's door'—that 'a pair of soles is tenpence; big uns, a shilling, or maybe one and two'—that 'mackerel is vareyus'; and that 'salt cod goes up always about Easter-time along with the Catholics.' Eels, she says, 'is always alive, accordin' to the cry; but they never shews no signs of life till you've skinned 'em.' Her acquaintance with the fish-supply of London extends no further than this; and for any additional information he may want, I must refer the inquirer to the fountain of knowledge at Billingsgate.

An inquisitive philanthropist asks, 'Why wear a coat that does not fit?' With a protest that I am not bound to reply to such a question unless I choose, I beg to submit that there may be many reasons for so doing. A coat that does not fit may be a fitter coat for many purposes than one that does. For lounging, gardening, dozing by the fire, your non-fitting coat is most suitable. Then, who is to decide what constitutes a fit? Is it a coat that cleaves to a man like an outer skin, in the fashion of George IV.'s time, or one that, 'like a lady's loose gown,' hangs about you, as one sees them now? Perhaps a coat may be either of these, and yet fit, or not fit, according as it is well or ill constructed. But, be the coat upon a man's back what it may, it seems to me a breach of manners to ask him why he wears it. What right have you, my friend, to hint so plainly at the *res angusta domi*, which often compels many a worthy man to wear any coat he can get to shield him from the weather? Why wear a coat that does not fit! 'Why does the miller wear a white hat?'

A querist of the same imperious character blurts out the abrupt question, 'Who's your hatter?' What's that to you, I should like to know? I shan't tell you. The man is an honest tradesman, and makes a decent hat, that I am not ashamed to put my head in, and sells it at a fair price. You have no right to be meddling with his business; and I hold your inquiry to be a piece of impertinence; and I shall not satisfy your curiosity. My hatter pays his way; I shall be glad to hear that you do the same.

A captious personage, whom I suspect to have interested motives, wants to know, 'Why ladies and gentlemen will wear wigs, fronts, or head-dresses which the most cursory glance detects,' when they might wear others that defy detection? The question, I must say, betrays a radical want of sincerity on the part of the questioner. He has evidently no notion that a lady or gentleman wears a wig with any other intention than that of deceiving their 'friends and the public.' The proper use of a wig, he requires to be told, is to keep the head warm, and to supply in an honest way the natural covering of which time or affliction has deprived the head—not to deceive the world.

The man, or woman either, who shaves off a set of gray or carrotty locks in favour of a black brutus or auburn curls, for which neither has any need, beyond the gratification of personal vanity—such a man or woman lives all day over head and ears in falsehood, and only dares the truth in the dark, and under a blanket. Take my word for it, Mr Holtzkopf, there are people who wear their wigs with a conscience, and are perfectly well satisfied that their wigs shall be recognised as wigs by all and sundry who may think it worth their while to determine the point. You may think them blockheads for the display of such needless sincerity—it would become you better to reverence them for the possession of virtues more valuable than all the wigs in the world, and to which your question, I am sorry to say, shews you to be an utter stranger.

A question which has been put with considerable pertinacity of late asks, 'Have you tasted our thirty-shilling sherry?' I cannot reply with certainty, but I suspect I have. One day last week, on landing at the Great Northern station, after a couple of days' trip in the country, I met Captain Gollop on the platform, and he lugged me off to take tiffin—the captain has served in India—with him at his lodgings in the New Road. A cold capon and a plate of Norfolk sausages made their appearance in quick time; and the captain drew from the sideboard a black bottle, from which he extracted the cork in his usual dexterous manner, and then decanted the contents, and poured me out a glass. I drank it without misgiving, and though I felt disposed to make a wry face immediately, succeeded, by a hard struggle, in maintaining some degree of composure. Not so the captain. The moment he had tasted the stuff, he grinned as though his great toe were in a vice, and exploded a terrible oath. The offending liquid was immediately ordered out of the room, and its place supplied by a more genial vintage. I am inclined to think the abominable stuff was 'our thirty-shilling sherry,' but cannot be quite certain, and the captain is too sore on the subject to permit my venturing an inquiry.

The next question is the most important one in the whole category, and I can but express my surprise at the deliberate coolness with which the inquirer propounds it in the public prints. He asks me point-blank, and without the slightest tinge of the circumlocution office, 'Do you think of getting married?' Really, this is coming to close quarters indeed. What if I do? Am I obliged to make him my confidant? And if I don't, am I compelled to confess as much? Please to note, that he does not ask me if I *intend* to get married. If he had shaped his question to that effect, I might and would have answered at once, that I have no intentions whatever of that sort; that, having led the life of a bachelor for fifty years, I consider it now too late in the day to submit myself to matrimonial responsibilities; and that all views of that kind I had ever entertained have vanished long ago in the dim distance. But he is not satisfied with knowing what my purposes may be in that respect, but must needs rend the veil from my secret thoughts. Suppose it should be the case, that sometimes, in the dim twilight, when the window-curtains are drawn, and those 'faces in the fire' look out upon my solitude all fresh and glowing, and full of the memories of days for ever gone—suppose it should happen then that my thoughts revert to what might have been, had Julia listened to my suit five-and-twenty years ago, and that padded and long-legged ensign had not struck in and carried her off. What then? Has Mr Blinker any right to participate in these reminiscences? I question it; at anyrate, I am not disposed to make him the partner of my sad speculations, and I won't do it. What if I sometimes ponder less pensively about the Widow Winkin, with her four hundred a year in the three per-cents, which would have made

the decline of life so comfortable, and her interminable tongue and alcoholic temper, which would have made it so miserable? Is Mr Blinker to weigh my conduct in that matter in his balances of prudence, and sum me up, and write me down an ass or a Solon, according to his judgment? I shan't consent to that, if I know it. What my thoughts are in this particular, I shall keep to myself, and therefore decline most energetically to answer this question at all.

To atone for my reticence in regard to the above tender subject, I will answer the next question without the least reservation, verbal or mental. The inquiry is plain, perspicuous, and unsophisticated, and deserves a response in the same spirit. It demands hospitably, 'Do you like a dry, hot, mealy potato?' Candidly, I do; it is the very description of potato I prefer to all others—dry, hot, mealy! the epithets are all savoury and appetising—baked in an oven, and served up in their jackets, with butter, pepper, and salt, what can be nicer than they are for supper—when you have nothing better? When you have something better, of course they occupy a second rank; but place it in what rank you may, a potato that is dry, hot, and mealy asserts its own respectability, and cannot be despised. Yes; the dry, hot, mealy potato for ever!

The last question which I feel called upon to answer at the present time inquires, 'Do you keep livery-servants?' This demand smacks somewhat of the tax-gatherer, and might be supposed to emanate from him, were it not that the questioner makes no mention of 'dogs,' which, I have remarked, are uniformly classed with livery-servants in the tax-gatherer's schedule. As a lodger, who pays rent for furnished apartments with attendance, I might summarily dismiss this question, so far as I am individually concerned, with a negative; but looking to the respectability of the establishment in which I reside, and of Mrs Jones, who is at its head, I am bound to record that a livery is not altogether an unknown luxury at No. 24. The boy 'Bung,' the ever-active Mercury of the house, does wear a livery upon occasion. True, he is generally seen in a state of dishabille, his back minus a coat, his arms bare to the elbows, and his feet in a pair (or two odd ones) of cut-down boots. When wanted, he has to be excavated from the lower labyrinths of the basement floor, where, busy as a bee with boots, blacking, and brick-dust, he passes the mornings of his days. But when the parlour gives a dinner, or the first-floor holds a soirée, if you should happen to be one of the guests, you will see Bung brilliant in a clean face, a milkwhite collar and 'dickey,' neat slippers, and a showy suit of rather faded livery, a little tarnished in the lace and buttons, only a few sizes too big for him, and not very much the worse for wear—by candlelight. I have observed that the livery has changed three times during the five years of my tenancy with Mrs Jones. When Bung was what she calls a 'brat of a boy,' she liveried him in blue and gold, which Mr Solomons brought her in his bag, but which soon went to pieces, and had to be succeeded by a suit of drab and silver. Bung grew out of these, and now disports himself in a man's suit of Oxford gray and frogs, which is very becoming, and sets the seal of gentility upon our establishment. I may add, that whenever Bung waits at table in livery, his services are duly put down in the weekly bill; but I have great doubts, although Mrs Jones thus levies a tax for livery upon her lodgers, whether she pays a farthing herself on that score to the revenue.

I have now answered about a dozen of the most prominent of the great public questions of the day; and here, for the present, I shall conclude my responses. Whatever importance the reader may choose to attach to these questions—for myself, I have my own private opinions concerning them—he will not, he cannot deny that they are, among all the subjects of which the

press treats from time to time, those which it keeps with the most perseverance and persistency before the public eye. Other topics it treats of by fits and starts, and in a more or less abstract manner. The subject of national education is at a premium one day, at a discount the next; political reform comes and goes upon the platform of the broad sheet; the peace agitation is rampant at one season and dormant at another; and so on. But the whiskers, the oats, the perambulators, the wigs, the hot mealy potatoes, &c.—these things keep their ground; their foundations are deeply rooted beyond the mutabilities of the changing years, and bid defiance to the storms of fate. Whether such phenomena be according to the natural course of things, or whether they be the symbols of some profound and unexplained mystery, I leave to be decided by the 'coming man' when he shall have made his appearance.

METEORS IN GENERAL.

THE antique Lithuanian notion concerning meteors was, that they were star-destinies falling to the earth, when the vital threads with which they had been connected were severed. Other ideas regarding them were, however, also entertained, even in early times. The Greeks had many very remarkable fancies concerning them: Diogenes of Apollonia taught, that amongst the visible stars there moved others which were invisible and unnamed, but which occasionally were made luminous for a brief interval, as they were dashed to the ground. Plutarch remarks, in his life of Lysander, that the naturalists of his day believed meteors and shooting-stars to be celestial bodies, once possessing inherent motion and impetus of their own, but subsequently deprived of both, and, in consequence of necessity, precipitated to the earth as a *derrière resort*, when their other method of supporting themselves failed them. Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ conceived that all the stars in the heavens were mineral masses that had been torn from the earth, and inflamed by the impetuous force of a whirling, fiery ether, and that occasionally some of these burning masses were again returned to the terrestrial surface whence they had been derived, with the extinction of their flames. Theophrastus states, that the originator of this impetuous and ethereal theory also held that there were dark bodies moving about the earth, beneath the moon, and nearer to the former body than the lunar sphere.

While recalling critically what Plutarch and Theophrastus have left on record touching these matters, a very curious reflection arises to the mind, of how singularly near sagacious men often were, in the olden time, to stumbling upon great discoveries, and so recognising very important truths, which, nevertheless, eluded their grasps only by a hair-breadth, to be hidden for centuries, and then to be again caught up from their lurking-places by some slender thread that had been left to serve as a clue to their concealment. Exactly in this way, that old Greek idea of invisible bodies whirling about in space as extinguished, or yet to be lit-up stars, and occasionally revealing themselves as such to human vision for transient intervals, has again been revived in the speculations of modern science. On the first day of the present century, a distinguished astronomer, Professor Piazzi, detected a small opaque mass of material substance revolving as an irregular and pigmy planet about the sun, beyond the orbit of Mars; and since that day, thirty-seven other companion-masses to this one have been discovered, chasing each other through pretty much the same regions of space. The high probability is, that these *planetoid* or planet-like pigmies are all rough fragmentary bodies, and not completed spheres. Some of them are so small that it would take hundreds of them to constitute a moon—one of them appears to

have a surface about the size of France. Many high scientific authorities conceive that these planetoids are really fragments—severed portions of one planetary orb of moderate size which has been shattered by some unknown process of convulsion, and which has thus left its pieces flying about in the realms itself occupied with its travellings before the catastrophe occurred.

These planetoid masses, however, although comparatively small bodies, are yet sufficiently large to be seen sparkling in the sunshine when good telescopes are directed towards them. Keen eyes are now kept constantly on the watch for them, and are continually adding to their numbers year by year. It is known, that besides the thirty-nine already catalogued, there are others that have been seen for a passing instant, and that have then been lost before they could be accurately identified, so that they might be recognised again. But it is also well ascertained, that in addition to these shining planetoids, there are myriads upon myriads of fragmentary masses of very much smaller size whirling about in space, and which, on account of their minute dimensions, would only look like a cloud of dust in the sunshine, if thousands upon thousands of them were crowded together not more than 200 or 300 miles away from the terrestrial surface. These fragments of fragments, however, are planet-like in one particular—they circulate in regular orbits about the sun. They are actually the dark bodies of Anaxagoras: they do not circle, as he imagined, about the earth and beneath the moon; but their paths are so placed, that the majestic earth sometimes, in its yearly progress, suddenly sails in amongst them; and then, often one or more of the small bodies, in acknowledgment of the supremacy of the orb that has thus intruded its presence in their domains, sweep their little forms under the preponderant attraction brought to bear on them, and giving up for evermore their wandering habits and independence, rush down to the terrestrial surface, and attach themselves permanently to it.

When, however, these little occasional tributaries arrive at the earth, they do not coalesce with it quietly and stealthily; on the contrary, they do all in their power to draw attention upon themselves, and to assert their own dignity. They seem to say: 'See what an important contribution we bring to your rolling sphere!' As they pass through the air, on their downward course, they blaze out in flames, becoming for the time burning stars or meteors; they often rush along with a bustling, whizzing sound, and occasionally they mark their arrival with a terrific explosion. They are called 'meteors' because their blazing forms first burst upon human sight from on high. The term is derived from the Greek *meteoros*, 'lofty,' itself taken from two words which signify 'to raise aloft.' Here, then, is another hypothesis of meteor-nature to place beside the one previously alluded to—a cosmical or mundane explanation, to pair off with the mythological one. In this cosmical theory, there are, however, several very important features, and several very interesting bearings, which cannot be dealt with summarily even by a partisan of Lithuanian and Jacob Grimm. These, indeed, form so firm a base, and so strong a ground, that the theory itself is now received with especial favour by the most cautious of philosophers, as well as by intelligent people at large.

In the first place, there can be no doubt that meteors do come from regions far beyond the extent of the earth's atmosphere; they have been seen approaching the terrestrial sphere certainly at the height of 120 miles. Some observers say that they have noticed them when 400 miles away; but Olbers, a high authority in such matters, does not deem these observations trustworthy, on account of the difficulty of determining the small parallax angles concerned in the surveys out of which the calculations are made.

The path, however, along which meteors pass earthwards, is always a very open curve, known to mathematicians under the name of the *parabola*—that is, the 'curve of casting,' or along which bodies that are cast move. The form of this curve implies that the bodies travelling along it must have come from a very remote distance, and have been more and more sharply bent down towards the earth, by the increasing power of its attraction, as they drew nearer. The character of the meteor's path at once tells, when interpreted by mathematical principles, that it has really been a small planet-like, independent mass, coursing along in space, until it accidentally came so near to the earth in its travels, that it was caught and dragged down to the terrestrial surface by its powerful attraction.

But again: if meteors really were of the earth, earthy, and strictly belonging to its sphere, they would of necessity have about the same rate of speed, or translation through space, with this body; they would partake of its inherent momentum. Now, the rate of the earth's movement in space is well known—it is about sixteen geographical miles per second. All the meteors, however, that have been satisfactorily observed, were moving with a speed of between eighteen and thirty-six geographical miles per second. This at once affords proof that they are actually foreign bodies, so far as any relation to the earth's economy is concerned. The speed possessed by the planet Venus on its journey through space is nineteen miles per second, and the speed of Mercury is twenty-six miles per second. This naturally associates meteors, then, with planetary spaces that are generally nearer to the sun than the earth, although their movements may, in extreme cases, be so eccentric that they occasionally get within the reach of its gravitating power.

There is no room left for the entertainment of the question, whether ponderous masses do sometimes get precipitated to the ground when meteors fall? very weighty proofs, indeed, have been afforded of the fact. A friar was killed by a stone cast out of a meteor that visited Crema in 1511; another, a Franciscan monk, was killed in the same way at Milan in 1650; and two Swedish sailors met with a similar fate on shipboard in 1674. A meteoric stone was seen to fall at Agram, in 1751, and was dug from the ground, into which it had burrowed eighteen feet deep. Others have frequently been disinterred from a depth of from six to twelve feet. A stone seven feet across fell upon one occasion at Bahia, in Brazil; and another, seven feet and a half across, at Otumpa. On the year in which Socrates was born, a meteoric stone was cast to the ground in Thrace, which had the bulk of two mill-stones, and formed a complete wagon-load. The meteor of Angers, on the 9th of June 1822, and which left a luminous train and cloud-track behind it in the sky—like the one seen on the 7th of January in the south of England, in the present year—deposited a shower of stones, with loud detonations, sixty-eight miles north of Poitiers. These substantial consequences of meteoric apparitions are designated by a very expressive and appropriate name: they are called *aérolites*—a term compounded of two Greek words, which together signify 'air-stones.'

There is one character which is peculiar in the meteoric stone, and which proves to be of high significance: its substance is composed of various mineral ingredients which are identical with matters of familiar occurrence upon the earth; but amidst these, iron is found in great abundance as it never is found on the earth—that is, in a native or nearly pure metallic and uncombined state. On the terrestrial surface, iron is always mingled with diverse matters, from which it has to be extracted by art, when it is required as a pure metal. The omnipresent and corrosive oxygen of the air alone prevents it from maintaining such condition long: this rusts and eats it away. Oxygen

and iron have so irresistibly strong an attraction or affinity for each other, that they invariably combine when they are left together. Thus, then, the unoxidised and purely metallic condition of iron in the *ærolite* proves that it comes from a situation in which there is no oxygen—that is, from beyond the bounds of the atmosphere; and that it is, therefore, altogether un-terrestrial, and foreign to the earth's economy, until violently appropriated and made a portion of it by its forced fall. There is thus here an interesting corroboration of the conclusions that have been drawn from other sources. A remarkable combination or alloy of the three elements phosphorus, nickel, and iron, is also found in meteoric stones, which never presents itself in any of the genuine mineral masses of the earth.

The meteoric fragments, however, appear to have atmospheres of a certain kind of their own, although they are devoid of oxygen. In all probability, when on their proper progress out in space, they are enveloped in loose investments of combustible vapours, gathered about the hard and solid core, and occasionally extending into a sort of vapour-sphere from 2000 to 3000 miles wide. These investments of combustible vapours accompany them on their wide sweeping flights; but when they are whirled violently into the oxygen-containing terrestrial atmosphere, they kindle under its blast-like breath, and burst into flame. The flame then leaves its train of smoke-like productions floating in the aerial regions it has rushed through, and shining in the sunlight or twilight, until gradually dispersed by diffusion. Such was the remarkable cloud-like track that formed so interesting a consequence of the meteoric apparition of the 7th of January. It was merely the condensed vapour produced by the burning of the gaseous investment of an *ærolite* flung through the air. The vapour could be distinctly seen, in the first instance, condensing out of the transparent gases that were primarily developed. The heat produced by the flame on the external surfaces of *ærolites*, seems to be altogether so sudden and transient, that it has not time to soften the solid mass contained within. The stones never present any appearances of indentation, as they would if they had been plastic or half-plastic, in consequence of their raised temperature, when they struck the ground; but the heat, nevertheless, must be of a very intense character while it lasts, for the surface of the *ærolite* always has a pitch-black glazed appearance. There is, in fact, a perfectly vitrified or enamelled crust, something less than a tenth of an inch in thickness, covering the inner substance, and separated from it by a clearly marked line. The flame of the meteor is evidently more fierce than that of the hottest porcelain furnace, for this is altogether inefficient for the production of any such perfect process of glazing as the *ærolite* exhibits. Meteoric stones have been found to be very hot when discovered in the ground, and some have retained their high temperature for hours.

If, then, the 'verpeja' hypothesis of the beautiful apparition of the 7th of January be not received, a very satisfactory alternative remains. The falling-star was originally a small fragmentary mass of mineral substance, rushing through space with planetary momentum, and revolving in some very lengthened and eccentric kind of oval about the sun, in accordance with the conditions of universal gravitation; and this mass, having accidentally approached the voluminous earth too nearly, became so powerfully attracted by the terrestrial substance, that it was constrained to withdraw its allegiance from the sun, and to rush to the earth, entering the atmosphere, and becoming luminous at its utmost limits, where it first found oxygen enough to support flame, and then leaving its burnt vapours behind it in the terrestrial air, and precipitating its heated and glazed mineral nucleus somewhere near the coast of France, as an *ærolite*.

Such is the rational hypothesis men of science will hold concerning this meteor; and upon the several grounds which have been specified, it must be admitted that the reason in the hypothesis is very good—better, we fear, than that which is comprised in the pretty myth recorded by Jacob Grimm.

When the Franciscan monk was killed by the meteoric stone at Milan, an Italian philosopher was struck too; but the philosopher was struck only by a less formidable missile—namely, by an idea. His idea was, that *ærolites* are stones cast out from volcanoes in the moon, and projected so far by the violence of the eruption, that they get from the sphere of lunar attraction into that of the earth's. This view seemed so plausible, that it was subsequently adopted by many men of science, to account for the original launching of these fragmentary masses into space. Several skilful mathematicians have at different times concerned themselves with the consideration of this notion. The most expert of these—Olbers and Chladni among the number—have decided against its probability, on the ground that the force required for the production of the effect would need to be so much more vast than any that would be likely to be exerted by such an influence. Dr Peters found that stones are only ejected, when at their greatest speed, with a movement of 3000 feet per second from the crater of the Peak of Tenerife. But the starting velocity of masses erupted from the moon would need to be 110,000 feet per second, to enable them to get across to the earth, and to arrive at it with meteoric speed. It is deemed very improbable that the little moon should have relatively so much more volcanic energy bottled up in its sphere than the earth, to render it capable of such an exertion.

A TALE OF ANDORRA.

IN THREE PARTS.—CONCLUSION.

CARLOS, to whose company we now return, made a hasty breakfast on the brown bread of the country, at Escaldos, the first village in the valley; and on setting out again, found himself in the company of a large number of Andorrans, all bent on the same journey as he, and with the same object; for on that day, the syndic, the viguiers, and the council (an elective body) of Andorra, were to meet for the purpose of deciding the fate of Guyonemé Sagrita. Various were the opinions he heard expressed, as to what that decision would be, but all seemed aware that the two French executioners had refused to act; and every one declared that no one would be found in the valley itself to supply their place. It may seem curious that, in such an emergency, a Spanish executioner should not have been applied to or even thought of; but the fact is, that the Andorrans, though on excellent terms with their southern neighbours—as, indeed, the mixed festival at Puigcerda testified—have a great jealousy of any Spanish interference other than that exercised by the Bishop of Urgel in spiritual matters; and, as if from grateful reminiscences of Charlemagne, are decidedly French in feeling, and look to France alone in all difficulties, civil or political.

Old Andorra, as the capital of the republic, possesses a public building, a kind of *hôtel de ville*; and here, of course, the proceedings of the day were to be carried on. The ground-floor of this edifice was devoted to stabling purposes, for the accommodation of the horses and mules on which the councillors and other officials had ridden to the assize, such things as an inn and its pendicles being altogether unknown in the place. Above, was a large barn-like hall, open to the rafters;

this was the court-house. At one end of it stood four-and-twenty massive oaken chairs, for the members of the council, and on the wall behind these was fixed the armorial shield of Andorra, rudely carved in wood, and blazoning the arms of Béarn, quartered with those of Foix. Before these chairs were placed others for the syndic, the two viguiers, and two members of the council to be chosen as assessors; and in front of these, again, was a table, with a seat on one side, for the clerk of court, and one on the other for the single notary of the valley, the latter functionary acting in criminal cases as *procureur de la république*. Such prosecutions, we may say in passing, are rare, even for small offences; and one for murder, as was that of Sagrita, had not taken place within the memory of living man.

The rest of the hall, as Carlos and his companions entered it, was already nearly filled with Andorrans, all standing—there were no seats for the audience—in gravity and silence, and evidently much impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. They were mostly dark, handsome, and muscular fellows—no women, by the custom of the country, can be present in such an assembly—but a few, by their light hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion, shewed themselves not to be of pure Andorran blood, but probably of that once persecuted, and even yet but barely tolerated race, the Cagots, as to whose origin there is so much dispute, and whose public mingling with their neighbours would formerly not have been allowed.

The clock of the church struck noon, and the bell began to toll: a confused sound of whispering voices rose in the court, hushed again almost immediately as the council and magistrates entered and took their seats. Sagrita was then brought in, attended by a venerable-looking priest, and followed by two Andorrans, armed with fowlingpieces and sabres, but without any uniform. The prisoner was then placed at the bar—in front, that is to say, of the foremost table. The syndic next announced to two of the council that they had been chosen assessors to the court; upon which the parties designated came forward to the chairs meant for them. Some other formalities having then been gone through, all the officials, together with the prisoner and the old priest, retired again; this was to hear the primate curé of Andorra, as the chief ecclesiastical authority in the valley is titled, say mass in an adjoining chapel. As they disappeared, those of the assembly who could find room fell on their knees; others turned their faces to the wall: all were profoundly silent.

After the lapse of half an hour, the officials returned, and took their respective places; and Sagrita was again brought in front of the table, where he was now joined by an Andorran, one of the wealthiest proprietors of the district, who acted as his *rahnador* (literally, spokesman) or counsel, appointed by the court; and then, in the idiom of the country—a mixture of Catalanian and the *patois* of the Ariège—the syndic, speaking sonorously, addressed the prisoner.

'Guyonemé Sagrita,' he said, 'you have been a bad man! Many here know that for a long time your courses have been evil. You know yourself what was the character you bore among your neighbours; you well know that your conduct was such that they shunned you for it. Nevertheless, till lately you were, if I may so speak, only vicious; and however much you had offended Heaven, you had not yet, so far as we know, transgressed the laws of man. But your wickedness was not to stop within the bounds where, from our mere human justice, you would have been secure. You at last committed a crime! And what a crime! The

life which you were bound to watch over and defend at the risk of your own, you took; her whom you had solemnly vowed to love and cherish, you killed: you made yourself a murderer, and it was your wife who was your victim. And this foulest of deeds you did, not in anger, not in the heat of sudden passion, but as deliberately as cruelly. You went a long way hence to procure poison; a smile on your lips, you administered the poison with your own hands. You had been brutal to your unhappy wife, and had almost driven her to leave you; but when you returned with that treacherous smile on your lips, and with honeyed words on your tongue, she was deceived by your smile, and trusted your words, and accepted joyfully your accursed blandishments, and began to hope, poor thing, for better days. And then, from you—from you, she took the food you had poisoned to destroy her.'

The syndic then recapitulated the circumstances of the case, and shewed how not the shadow of a doubt could exist of the prisoner's guilt.

'And on this clear evidence,' he continued, 'you were most justly found guilty; and the punishment which the law appoints for such a crime is death. And therefore, when you were last before us, you were solemnly condemned to die; and die in virtue of that condemnation you should, were it not that'—

Here Sagrita uttered a shrill cry, and fainted. Pale of cheek, but with a bloodshot eye, his teeth set in despair, yet his lips working convulsively, he had been straining every faculty to catch and comprehend the syndic's meaning; and now that, when almost beyond all hope, he gathered that his every chance for his life was not yet past, the reaction overpowered him. Some restoratives, however, being administered to him, he speedily recovered, and the magistrate went on. He described the successive refusals of Leblanc and Levi; he expressed, for himself and for his brethren, the repugnance they felt at renewing the application, or addressing it elsewhere, and he rather uneasily added: 'No one here, I am afraid, will undertake the office?' But as no one spoke, the worthy man felt reassured again—his passing apprehension lest, by any chance, Andorra should number among her sons one who would become an executioner, being now completely removed—and in his impressive and ringing voice continued:

'I thought as much; and expecting this, after hearing divers opinions, thus have we with one voice resolved. The sentence pronounced on you, Guyonemé Sagrita, is one which we find has been pronounced in this valley before. If it is inadequate as a punishment, it at all events rids us of a monster. If we cast you loose again upon the world, it will be as a marked man; but the rest of the life we now spare will perhaps, and I would fain hope it, be passed in penitence and prayer, as far as in you lies, if so it may be that your guilt may be purged from your soul. Guyonemé Sagrita, our unanimous vote is, that you be subjected to the penalty of the *desterro*; that is to say, that after being branded on the shoulder with the letters D. P. S., the initials of *desterro per sempre* [banished for ever], you shall be taken in custody to the frontier of the republic, at any point you may yourself name, and then driven forth with this warning—that if you are again found within our limits, you shall be treated as a wild beast, whom it shall be lawful for any one to kill; nay, whom any one meeting him shall be bound to kill. And so, in the name of justice, and in virtue of my office, I pronounce it shall be.'

As the syndic concluded, Sagrita drew a long breath, and then looked round him with an expression of wild satisfaction: the coward was now assured of his dear life. His *rahnador* rose and bowed, signifying that he had nothing to say.

'The public court is over,' said the syndic; 'let all retire.'

Carlos had already disappeared.

Juana was sitting on her balcony watching for one who still came not; so had she been for very many days, with the exception of the short intervals when sheer exhaustion compelled her to take some repose. Still, Carlos returned not. The news of the judgment in Andorra had reached her; and she had heard that he had been seen present when it was pronounced, but further tidings of her lover she had none. A sallow young man, with a sinister expression of countenance, had called on her several times to inquire if she knew anything of the muleteer, and where he was to be found, and had left her on his last fruitless visit with furious imprecations and threats against 'the cheat who had deceived and robbed him,' as he said. His frantic words and gestures had startled her; but she seemed to become stupefied as her despair grew stronger, and to have room in her mind for but one idea, that she should remain at her post, so as to catch the first appearance of him on his return. But would he ever return now?

Six weeks had passed since his departure, and she was sitting one evening watching, when an old man, with white hair flowing over his shoulders, stopped at her door. He was accompanied by a beautiful girl, whose large, lustrous eyes wandered timidly from object to object, with the expression of one who was unaccustomed to find herself in a strange place and amongst strangers, but who so found herself there and in that place. After an inquiry of one who was passing, as if to assure himself that he had found the house he sought, the old man knocked at the door, and the nurse appearing, he asked for her young mistress.

'Peace be with you, my daughter!' said the stranger as he entered the room, into which Juana came from the balcony when he and his companion were announced. 'You have doubtless been in sad uncertainty and sorrow, but I bring good news.'

'Of my Carlos? speak!' gasped his hostess.

'Of Carlos—of Carlos the muleteer. He has been ill, very ill; but he is now doing well, and will be here before a week is over.'

'Before a week is over! Days still to wait! I will go to him at once. I may surely do so,' she added blushing, and with a little hesitation: 'he is my betrothed husband.'

'I know,' said the old man kindly; 'but you must still have patience. He is well cared for; and your presence might do him harm, for he must be kept quiet yet some two or three days.'

'Who are you to advise me?' cried Juana impatiently and with a tinge of suspicion.

'Dear lady,' said the young girl in a gentle voice, 'we are friends, and have come hither to relieve the anxiety you must have had. We have no motive but that of kindness to one who has surely been suffering great distress—and we may be trusted,' she added somewhat proudly, and even reproachfully.

'I believe it—I believe it,' cried Juana, taking both the hands of the other in her own. 'Forgive me. I spoke folly. I am not ungrateful. But oh, for these long days and weeks, I have in truth suffered much!'

'Be assured that all is well'—began the old man.

'Then why did he not write to me?' interrupted the excited girl, her doubts returning.

'You shall hear, my daughter. Carlos has been wounded.'

'By Guyonemé Sagrita! I know it—I felt it! It was my foreboding when he went. Tell me at once.'

'It is even so. He is wounded in the right arm, and so cannot use his pen.'

'The murderer—the traitor! He who owes his life to my Carlos—who owes his escape from the scaffold!'

A flood of tears here came to the relief of the poor

girl's overwrought feelings; and soothed gradually by the gentle attentions of the old man and his companion, she at last became calm. 'You are very, very kind,' she said at last; 'you bear with my weakness most feelingly. But I am better. Pray, tell me all you know. I have been told of the judgment, and that Carlos left Andorra as it was pronounced. More I know not.'

'Shortly after the disappearance of Carlos,' said the old man, 'there came one hither to inquire of you about him. Do you know who that person was?'

'I remember one who seemed a Frenchman, a fellow of a bad look. Do you mean him?'

'Yes. His name was Leblanc.'

'Not the executioner of Foix? Carlos told me of such a one with that name,' said Juana, with evident signs of aversion, which did not escape the notice of the other.

'Such he was,' said he, looking hard at her. 'Pray, did Carlos speak to you of any other executioner?' he added after a moment's pause.

'He also spoke of a certain Levi of Perpignan.'

'I am that Levi,' returned Juana's visitor.

'Ah!' cried she, shuddering and shrinking as it were from him. Levi took no notice of the feeling she betrayed, but his daughter grew very pale, and then reddened violently.

'But,' continued Juana, replying to her own involuntary thought, 'Carlos spoke well of you—said you were stern but conscientious—thought only of your duty.'

'Did he so?' exclaimed the old man, exhibiting some emotion.

'Blessings on him for it!' murmured his daughter.

'Carlos,' resumed Levi, recovering his usual calm tone, 'had bribed that Leblanc, as you probably know, and for what: so much he paid him, and more he promised. Disappearing, he did not keep that promise: to this, attribute your visit from Leblanc. He left you in anger, probably?'

'I think he did,' said Juana; 'but I took little heed of him.'

'The wretched creature returned to Foix in a frenzy of disappointment, quarrelled with his mistress, and killed her in his passion. Since you saw him here, he has been tried, convicted, and executed.'

'Ah!' ejaculated Juana, startled at the abrupt disclosure, and unexpectably shocked at thus hearing the horrid fate of one who so short a time before had stood alive beside her in that room. 'May all the saints have mercy on the unhappy man!'

'My services were required.'

Again Juana shuddered involuntarily, and again Levi's daughter grew pale and red by turns.

'It was then I heard that Carlos had disappeared. He had interested me. I made inquiries—searched for days—gained trace of him—followed it—found him I sought.'

'Wounded and suffering,' cried Juana, 'and I not there! Who tended him? Who was with him? Who is with him? Oh, where is he?'

'Patience, my daughter, and you shall hear all. I told you before that my news was good. You know the feeling that Carlos entertained as to Sagrita, your cousin, paying the penalty he had incurred; the mistaken feeling, I may say, for so I think it—or at least thought it,' added Levi, after a moment's hesitation. 'But you probably, nay, I am sure, do not know that Carlos had resolved that your cousin should not be a living shame to his family—to you—if your betrothed could help it. And, with this false principle of honour, he had made up his mind from the first to risk his life against Sagrita's. To make the story short: when the latter was set free on the frontier of Andorra, he was still watched and followed by an avenger of blood, who kept in view till no other human eye was upon them, and then coming up to him, briefly

told him his determination, offered him the choice of two Albacete knives he had till then concealed under his *copa*, and bade him defend himself, saying sternly that both should not leave that place alive.

Juana breathed hard, and her eyes glistened, as did also those of Levi's daughter; but the old man was not interrupted.

'Sagrita expostulated, implored, even fell on his knees; but finding Carlos inflexible, he at last accepted one of the weapons; and then the moment he had it in his hand, he threw himself on his generous enemy before the latter was on his guard, stabbed him in three places, and took to flight, leaving him for dead. I have little more to add. A shepherd found Carlos stretched on the ground, and insensible. Assistance was procured from other shepherds, and he was conveyed to one of their huts. They tended him as well as they could; but when he came to himself, he was too weak to speak. Then fever set in—in fact, he was delirious when we found him; so that they could gather nothing from him as to who he was, or whence he came, or who had wounded him. But, as I said, he is now out of all danger. I possess some knowledge of medicine, and treated him, I am glad to say, so successfully, that if all goes well, you may depend on having him here within the week, as I promised. He insisted that in the meantime I should come to relieve your anxiety, otherwise I should not have left him. But he is in kind and careful hands: the simple folk he is with watch over him as if he were a brother.'

'Now may all the saints be praised!' said Juana fervently; 'and blessings follow you, worthy man, for all your goodness!' More she would have added, but her strength, which seemed to have supported her only till she had heard the good news, now failed her, and she sank insensible to the ground at Levi's feet. At the summons of the old man, the nurse appeared, and the useless lamentations into which she broke at the sight of her swooning mistress being quickly exchanged by an energetic remonstrance from him into the needful exertions, Juana was conveyed to her chamber and put to bed. Fever succeeded, and raged more or less for days, but the medical knowledge of the old man was again beneficially exerted; nor was the gentle and unceasing care with which his daughter tended the sufferer without the effect it so well deserved. And when at last Carlos returned, joy completed the cure; and then Levi and Rachel took their leave.

'Be happy, my children!' said the old man to the muleteer and his bride. 'Be thankful, Carlos, that you were not permitted to take vengeance into your own hand and to determine yourself the fate of Sagrita. Be thankful, Juana, that your lover has not to answer for the blood of your relative. And so farewell! Rachel and I go to the south—her mother's kindred dwell not far from Sevilla, and expect us gladly. My profession I have renounced, for my stern creed has lately been much mingled with doubt; and, besides, when I think of this dear child, I see my duty otherwise than I did. Farewell!'

And so, not without tears on all sides, Levi and Rachel parted from their Puigcerda friends, and went their way. Of Sagrita, nothing more was heard. The authorities of Andorra had allowed him to retain a sum of money sufficient to support him for some time; and it was supposed that he had made for some seaport, and taken ship to some distant country.

It was a few months after the events I have narrated in these chapters, that I was on my way to the port of Venasque, a well-known pass in the Pyrenees, near the Maladetta, 'the Accursed,' the loftiest mountain in the chain, and one the highest peak of which has never been trodden by human foot. I had for sole companion a Catalonian, a muleteer, who was returning to his own country, and had volunteered to be my guide; and, not

to make any mystery about the man, I may as well say at once that it was Carlos, now quite recovered; and a very fine fellow I found him.

The day was enchanting, the scenery magnificent, and what with enjoying it and taking an occasional, though, I am bound to confess, always unsuccessful shot at an izard, several troops of which animal crossed our path, and frequently tempted us to diverge from it, our progress had been slower than we had intended, and evening began to approach while we were yet far from our destination. In short, we saw that we should have to pass the night on the mountain. Carlos, however, knew of a hut in which the shepherds occasionally took shelter; and with the hope of at least having something of a roof over us, thither we directed our steps. We were not, however, destined to reach it; such a storm came on as is to be met with only amongst such mountains. Stunned by the thunders that exploded every instant, and rattled and reverberated among the gigantic rocks and through the narrow defiles; dazzled by the glare of the incessant lightning, which forked and played on every side round us; and, finally, driven from our path by a sudden gust of wind, and unable to recover the track, blinded as we were by the blast of sleet that drove furiously in our faces, we were glad indeed when, unexpectedly, we came to the entrance of a cave, deep enough for us to place ourselves completely beyond the reach of the elements. It was not untenanted we found, for a party of Spanish *contrabandiers*, overtaken by the tempest like ourselves, had already made their way to it—not like us, by chance, but through the knowledge which men of their pursuits possess of all such harbours for an emergency. Our hosts—for so they might be called—treated us very liberally, offered us a share of what provisions they had, including some very tolerable *aguardiente*, which, in that cold and damp cave, was very acceptable. Then, as we smoked our cigars and cigarettes, came story after story, and occasionally a song; and when at last night had completely closed in, the whole party of us lay down to sleep, wrapped in our cloaks, and making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

The next morning, at sunrise, all were afoot; and we prepared to descend into Spain. Just as we were starting, an exclamation from one of the party drew the attention of all the others. It came from the most remote part of the cave. 'They are bones!' he cried. On examination, a human skeleton and one of a bear were found. Clutched still firmly in the fleshless, but not yet tendonless hand of the former, was a knife. 'I see,' said one of the men; 'this poor fellow has taken refuge here, and been attacked by that monster; and the man and the beast have killed each other.'

The knife passed from hand to hand, till it came to Carlos, who, on examining it, grew deadly pale. 'I know this knife,' he said, after a long pause; 'and I know whose remains these must be.'

The knife was the Albacete blade he had offered to Guyonemé Sagrita, when he challenged him to duel after the expulsion of the latter from Andorra.

The muleteer and the smugglers scraped a shallow grave, and deposited the bones of the identified murderer in it, muttering as they did so a few hasty prayers. Of that identity, a ring, still remaining on one of the fingers, had left no doubt.

And on our way to Puigcerda, Carlos told me the story, the main features of which I have now offered the reader. I only wish I could have given it more nearly in his own picturesque language. And at Puigcerda, he presented me to the beautiful Juana, who supplied some gaps in her husband's narrative.

They caused masses to be said for the soul of Sagrita, and also for that of Leblanc, whose catastrophe Carlos thought he had precipitated by his involuntary failure to keep his promise. I have only to add, that shortly

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before my visit, they had received a letter from old Levi, announcing the betrothal of his daughter to one of her own people.

THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE.

It is on record that when Captain Morris wanted to write a song against Mr Pitt in the *Yankee dialect*, he could scarcely find a peculiar 'Yankee' word or phrase to suit his purpose. Since that date, the case has greatly altered. Americanisms are now so abundant, and so likely to multiply to an unlimited extent, as to suggest the probability that they may tend to corrupt permanently the English language. A passing glance at the subject may therefore be not unprofitable, and may serve at any rate to gratify the curiosity of English readers.

We should observe, at starting, that all Americanisms are not necessarily new coinages of speech, nor even corrupted applications of authentic English words; many of them being traceable to provincial usage in the mother-country, and seeming to have gained a settlement in the States along with the original emigrants who took them out as a portion of their stock of vocabularies. Mr Bristed, an accomplished American, who has lately investigated the subject,* and of whose views and researches we here avail ourselves, remarks that the number and force of producible instances of this kind are greater than is generally supposed.

The difference between the language of the two countries is not so much apparent in their literature as in their familiar and accustomed forms of speech. To illustrate this, Mr Bristed gives an extract from a supposed conversation between two American gentlemen, one of whom joins the other in the country, and relates a series of accidents that happened to him on leaving the city. The incidents are necessarily of the most trivial description, as they are selected to exemplify everyday familiar phrases. 'First of all, our new *waiter* forgot to go to the *book-store* for your parcel; so that was left behind. I am afraid it will be as long on the road as the last bouquet you sent us, which was quite *wilted* when it arrived. Then, as I was *riding* down quietly in a *hack*, one of the horses, a vicious-looking *sorrel*, tried to run away, and the hack did run into a *wagon*, and upset it. When the horse was stopped, he began to kick, and kicked away his *whistle-tree* and the *dash-board*. I jumped out on the *side-walk*, and fell against a lady who was coming down her *stoop*. Neither of us was hurt, but I tore my *pantalons* and broke a *suspender*, and the lady's *hat* was crushed. As we were only two *blocks* from the steam-boat, I carried my small amount of *baggage* on board myself; and the first person I saw was X—, whom you admire so much: and he is *clever*, certainly; but I should say, though he is your friend, decidedly *silly*.'

We are assured that every one of the words above italicised, with the possible exceptions of *riding* and *clever*, would be naturally used under the circumstances by an American gentleman; and it is said, justly enough, that some of them would be apt to puzzle an Englishman just arrived in the country. Mr Bristed's strictures, however, on the word 'riding' are curious.

It is quite remarkable that so thorough a literary man should be ignorant that such expressions as 'riding in a coach' are to be met with in the best books and the best company in England. 'In spite of the well-known advice to an awkward horseman, to "get inside and pull up the blinds," he would hardly be able to conceive how the narrator could ride in a hack, still less how the hack could upset a wagon, and, not to dwell on other expressions, the last sentence would seem to him to involve a direct contradiction. . . . It may not be wholly uninteresting to run through our list of italics, and note their respective origin. First, then, *waiter* for footman. This usage has an important social signification, as shewing how hotel habits and phrases have predominated in the country, and invaded American private life. *Book-store* is bookseller's shop, *store* being used for shop universally. Sometimes the distinguishing epithets, also, are strangely altered; thus, a linen-draper's shop is termed a *dry goods-store*. The origin of the term is doubtful; perhaps national vanity had something to do with it, the proprietor of the smallest concern wishing to give it the title, if he could no other quality, of a large commercial establishment. *Wilted* for withered, is a provincialism; Halliwell assigns it to Bucks. *Hack*, in America, is always the abbreviation of hackney-coach, and driving is usually called *riding*—equestrian exercise being distinguished as riding on horseback. These phrases, too, throw a light on national manners, and prove an American preference for carriage over horse exercise. Does the American, then, never use the word *drive*? Yes; but he understands it only of holding the reins himself. Thus: "I rode to town with Smith"—that is, "I went in his vehicle, and he drove me;" "I drove to town with Smith"—that is, "I drove him." A few purists preserve the English distinction of the words. *Sorrel* horse, for chestnut, is a term now fallen into complete disuse in England, yet it has become obsolete only within the last forty years. It was a Suffolk word, and the sign of the *sorrel* horse probably exists to this day in front of some Suffolk ale-houses. . . . The word *wagon*, which the Englishman associates with the idea of one of the heaviest possible vehicles, an American as naturally associates with the idea of one of the lightest possible vehicles. How this very decided change was effected, it is not easy to explain. Perhaps it is a Teutonium (*wagen*, for carriage generally—the "wagon" being, *par excellence*, the vehicle of the country); but the general absence of Teutonisms in America militates against the supposition. *Whistle-tree*, the invariable American for splinter-bar—at least in the case of the wheel-horses—is the rustic *whipple-tree* very slightly changed. *Dash-board* is merely a corruption of *splash-board*. *Side-walk*, *causeway*, *trottoir*, is probably a pure American coinage; so is *suspenders* for braces. *Stoop*—the steps of a house—is pure and almost literal Dutch. *Pantalons* for trousers, and *hat* for bonnet, are obvious Gallicisms (*pantalon* and *chapeau*). Their introduction is easily accounted for by the fact, that many of the fashionable tailors, and most of the fashionable milliners, in the large cities are of French birth or descent. *Block* is primarily the parallelogram of houses bounded by four streets; thence, and more usually, the row of houses in one street between two others. "You must go so many blocks"—that is, so many streets. The English

* *The English Language in America*. By Charles Astor Bristed, B.A.—being one of a series of dissertations published under the title of *Cambridge Essays*, contributed by Members of the University. Parkers, London.

colloquial phrase, "a block in the street," for a stoppage in the street, is unknown to Americans. Equally unknown is the familiar term *luggage*—the graver word *baggage* being always employed. *Clever* is generally used in the sense of amiable, as it still is by the peasantry in some of the southern counties of England. Some purists maintain the ordinary English meaning of the word, which often leads to ambiguity; so that it is not uncommon to hear the question asked—"You say he is clever: do you mean *English clever* or *American clever*?"

To collect, examine, and explain all the American peculiarities of language, would be a work of much time and trouble, and one demanding no trifling preparation. Mr Bristed, therefore, confines himself to a notice of some of the most salient peculiarities and remarkable words belonging to the principal localities. The singularities, he tells us, of the dialect of the New England States do not consist so much in the introduction of new words, as in the general style of its pronunciation. 'Among its features of this sort may be mentioned a nasal intonation, particularly before the diphthong *ow*, so that *cow* and now are sounded *kyow* and *nyow*; a perverse misplacing of final *g* after *n*, almost equal to the Cockney's transposition of initial *h*, making *walkin* of walking, and *captin* of captain [decided Cockneyisms, Mr Bristed]: a shortening of long *o* and *u* in the final syllables; for example—*fortun* and *natur* for fortune and nature; on the other hand, a lengthening of various short syllables, as *nauthin* for nothing, and *genuine* for genuine. Also, a general tendency to throw forward the accent of polysyllables, and sometimes dissyllables; for example—*territôry*, legislative, conquêst. This tendency—from which, by the way, the very best classes of New England society are not altogether free—has been noticed as a Scotticism, erroneously, we think, for the Scotch sometimes misplace the accent; they throw it *backward* as often as *forward*—in *magazine*, for instance. Some peculiar words, however, are found, as—*doing chores*, for doing miscellaneous jobs of work (a north-country word,* for example—*char-woman*), and many peculiar uses of ordinary words. Thus, by the converse of the rule, "handsome is that handsome does," the New Englanders call an ill-natured person *ugly* or *hunly* (homely); and, by a similar transference of physical to mental qualities, they call a clever man *smart*. This last expression has travelled beyond its original locality, and is generally current among the masses all over the Union. *Friends* they use for *relations* [so the Scotch do, Mr Bristed], precisely—and it is worth observing, as an example of the coincidences that will occur in idioms the furthest removed by time and place—as the Greek tragedians used φίλοι. The employment of *guess* to express a vast variety of mental processes—to *think*, to *presume*, to *suppose*, to *imagine*, to *believe*, &c., &c.—was one of the earliest peculiarities of speech observed in America, and attributed to all Americans promiscuously. It is a pure New Englandism; and to put it into the mouth of a New Yorker, a Virginian, or a Missourian, is as great a blunder as it would be to represent a Cockney saying *ray* for *ten*, or a Scotchman *wint* for *went*.

Passing to the middle states, very few expressions are found to be peculiar to the New Yorkers; at the same time, there are some striking words of Dutch origin, which, being established in use when the city of New York was called New Amsterdam, have thence spread all over the Union, and been generally received. 'The first of these is *stoop*, a genuine Dutch noun, very slightly disguised in its present orthography. *Stoop* in Dutch means the same as *stoup* in English, a

drinking-measure: the real Batavian word represented is *stoep*, from the verb *stoepen*, to sit or *stoop* down. Originally applied to the bench placed, according to old Dutch custom, in front of the house, it came to designate all the steps on the topmost of which a bench was placed, and remained attached to them after the bench itself was swept away by the improvements of modern fashion. The word is used in all classes of society, as naturally as door or window. The next word, *loafer*, is so very common in America, that, although closely approximating to a slang term, it cannot be overlooked here. The expression only found its way into writing about the year 1830, but had been in use long before, especially in the vicinity of the markets. It is equivalent to vagabond intensified; and its personal application is one of the greatest insults that can be offered to an American—something like calling a Frenchman *canaille*. The third word is one used universally throughout the free states at least, and used in sober seriousness, without any slang intention, but confined entirely to the labouring classes. It is *boss*, for head-workman or employer. Servants will also use it in speaking of their master. This is good Dutch, although not immediately recognisable under its present orthography. The original Batavian is *baas*, a master-workman. . . . The New Yorkers have a tendency to make the same promiscuous use of *expect* that the New Englanders do of *guess*.'

In Pennsylvania, some of the largest counties were settled by Germans, whose descendants now amount to nearly a fourth of the population of the state, and who still continue to use their language. It does not appear, however, that the presence of that language has affected the speech of the English settlers; on the contrary, the English has corrupted the German, which has been reduced to a curiously compounded *patois*. The only marked Teutonicism current in the country is *hold on* (halt-an) for stop, and this may be only indirectly Teutonic; there being indications of its having been derived *immediately* from a nautical source. Turning to the southern states, the longest settled of which were colonised by English cavaliers, few marked or notorious peculiarities of expression are found to be prevailing. Some of these are, nevertheless, tolerably salient. 'They use *reckon* as the New Englanders do *guess*. They shorten the long sound of *a*—*stars* for stairs, and *bar* for bear—a pronunciation shared to some extent by their fellow-citizens of the Western states, and insert *y* in some cases before *ar*—*gyard* and *gyarden* for guard and garden—a style once fashionable in England, if Sheridan's dictionary is to be trusted. Among the lower classes, one sometimes meets with very queer words, such as *donocks* for stones, where we confess we are altogether at fault.'

On arriving at the 'great West,' the inquirer finds the materials for his investigation very abundant, but most of them encroaching on the 'forbidden ground of slang.' Our authority thinks it may be doubted whether, in this very new country, there is any generally recognised standard of refinement and propriety in language more than in other matters. 'There are districts,' says he, 'where it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that every prominent person has his own private vocabulary. The hunter-legislator, David Crockett, who flourished some twenty years ago, a brave but eccentric personage, was a specimen of this class; the well-known "Go ahead!" was one of his inventions. The infinite variety of Western phraseology embraces every sort of expression, from the clumsiest vulgarity to the most poetic metaphor; from unintelligible jargon to pre-fant sententiousness. Sometimes it luxuriates in elongation of words and reduplication of syllables, as if the mother English were not sufficiently strong and expressive—*cantankerous* for rancorous, *sawagerous* for savage. The

* It is also, as Mr Bristed might have added, a word in common use among the charwomen of London.

barbarous cant word *tee-total*, was doubtless thus coined by some Western speaker at a "temperance" meeting. Sometimes, it derives from its associations of forest and prairie life, picturesque and graphic phrases, such as *making tracks*, *drawing a bee-line*, and the primitive salutation "stranger!"—another unintentional Hellenism which carries the hero back to Homer's time. And sometimes again it degenerates into a fondness for words of all-work, that seemingly betoken equal poverty of thought and language. They use or abuse *calculate* as the New Englanders do *guess*. The verb *fix*, which has more than its legitimate share of work all over the Union, they drive unmercifully, and have introduced its participial noun *fixing* to a commanding position in the conversational vocabulary. In some places, *tote* expresses every variety of fetching, lending, or carrying; and *truck* every commodity that can be subjected to the process of *toting*. There is a familiar legend of an English traveller who, on hearing Sambo directed to "tote the gentleman's horse to the barn (stable), and give him some truck," not unnaturally concluded that truck was the Kentuckian for hay or oats. But soon another Sambo was ordered to "tote in some truck for the fire," and appeared with an armful of pine-wood. The traveller, wondering if the horses of the country were *lignivorous*, appealed to the judge or colonel who acted as landlord for information, and was comforted by the satisfactory assurance that "truck meant everything in those parts." It is not certain whether the term *help* for servant, often set down as a general Americanism, but in fact scarcely known in the middle states, is of Western or of New England origin. It is generally used in both sections of the country.

Apart from the consideration of slang which Mr Bristed has avoided as much as possible, there are a few words of American invention which have gained a permanent position in the language. They are, for the most part, words formed to express either old or new ideas with greater clearness or convenience than any words previously existing. *Talented* may be mentioned as one in question, which, though for a while scouted as a vulgarism in certain quarters, somehow holds its ground, and is not likely to be dispossessed of the place which it has taken. *Realised*, again, seems to be another; it is not mentioned by Mr Bristed, but we have the authority of Mr Helps for regarding it as a legitimate Americanism. On the whole, however, the number of words contributed by America, which can be considered as natural and appropriate growths of the language, is very inconsiderable. The English tongue has as yet received, in that quarter of the world, no remarkable development. On the other hand, as regards the present supremacy of the English language in America, there seems every reason to believe that that supremacy will be maintained. The Anglo-Saxon element, in all conceivable respects, is the main element at once of progress and of permanence in the great Western continent. The bulk of the inhabitants are the descendants of Anglo-Saxon forefathers, and in point of influence and enterprise, they are the leading race throughout the Union. With such comparatively trifling modifications as have been indicated, the English language will doubtless continue to be the language of the general American nation. 'And surely,' as Mr Bristed observes, 'this ought to be a source of no small satisfaction to Englishmen. Among the many glories that England has to boast of, it is not, and will not be one of the least that she, more successful in this respect than the other nations of Europe, has transmitted and permanently established beyond the broad ocean liberal institutions, evangelical religion, and a language which, whatever harshness of sound or clumsiness of inflection may disfigure it... has been the vehicle of many of the greatest productions of human reason and human genius; the language of

Milton and Shakspeare, of Macaulay and Tennyson—one and the same with the language of Irving, Bryant, and Longfellow.'

THE FAIR OF NISHNEI-NOVGOROD.

THERE are two Novgorods in Russia—one Novgorod-Velikii, or the Great Novgorod, of which runs the saying,

Who can resist God and Novgorod?

the other, Nishnei—or, as it is spelt in Russian, Nishnyi—Novgorod, that is, the 'Lower Novgorod.' The former, as we all know, lies not very far from the Gulf of Finland; the latter is situated between Moscow and the Siberian frontier, on a fine triangular height at the junction of the rivers Oka and Volga. It is the capital of an important government of the same name; and, from its position, not only admirably adapted to the pursuits of commerce, but so commanding and so central in regard to Asiatic and European Russia, that Peter the Great, as appears from a plan which has been discovered in the imperial archives, at one time intended to make it the seat of the capital of his empire, instead of founding St Petersburg in the marshes of the Neva.

'The city,' according to Cochrane, who visited it more than thirty years ago, 'is large, scattered, and somewhat ill built, but evidently improving. The upper part, in which the governor, chief officers, and military reside, is, of course, the best. Its situation is peculiarly pleasant and airy, though surrounded by the stubborn remains of the old citadel and Tatar wall. The lower town, which may be termed the St Giles's of the city, is occupied principally by persons engaged in merchandise.' The prosperity of Nishnei-Novgorod has, since those days, been yearly on the increase; but it is not of the city we intend to speak, but of the fair, to which it owes its renown.

And where is this fair? We have already passed the city-gates, but no symptom of any such assemblage of men or merchandise has yet revealed itself to our vision. We must turn from the town and its suburbs, for in neither of these is the fair to be held; and leaving the Volga, that most majestic of Russian rivers, proceed to its tributary, the Oka; and there, on a low, almost inundated flat, exposed to the waters of both rivers, we behold a scene of bustle and activity unparalleled in Europe.

A vast town of shops laid out in regular streets, with churches, hospitals, barracks, and theatres, lies before us, now tenanted by more than 100,000 souls, but destined in a few weeks to be as dead and silent as the grave; for when the fair is over, not a creature will be seen on the spot which is now swarming with human beings. Yet these shops are not the frail structures of canvas and rope with which the idea of a fair is inseparably associated in our own merry England. They are here regular houses, built of the most substantial materials, and are generally one story high, with large shops in front, and sleeping-rooms for the merchant and his servants behind. Sewers, and other means of maintaining cleanliness and health, are provided still more extensively than in the regular towns of Russia.

The business of the fair is of such importance, that the governor of the province, the representative of the emperor himself, takes up his residence in the midst of it during the greater part of the autumn. There is a large handsome palace built for him in the centre of the scene of traffic, which accommodates a train of secretaries and clerks numerous enough to manage the revenues of a kingdom. Strong posts of military are planted all round, to keep down the unruly whenever they shew signs of an inclination to indulge in a little gratuitous rioting; while the Cossack police

continue always on the look-out for thieves, who, notwithstanding their vigilance, still contrive to reap a very tolerable harvest from the unwary in this not very select community.

It is from the heights of the Kremlin, or citadel of Nishnei-Novgorod, that we command the most imposing view of the great fair. Casting a look over the two arms of the Oka, which lies beneath us, to a spot situated at the distance of about a mile from where we stand, our eye can clearly trace the connecting-link of men and carriages, rushing like mighty waters hither and thither along the causeway, and over the long wide bridges of boats from the city to the mart, and from the mart to the city. Just under us, lies a steep and difficult slope, leading to the banks of the river, and lined with a skirting of good and substantial houses. This slanting street, forming thus an inclined plane from the town to the water's edge, is filled with a countless throng from morning till night—carriages, wagons, droskies, and pedestrians uniting to form the only scene—except, perhaps, the Toledo of Naples—that can be at all compared with the crowds of Fleet Street or Cheapside.

On passing the last bridge of boats, we find ourselves on the threshold of the fair. This part is generally crowded with labourers looking out for employment, and Cossacks among them to preserve order. Then come lines of temporary booths, displaying objects of inferior value for the lower classes—such as beads, trinkets, and especially caps. Of these there are a great variety—round turbans from Astrakhan, the best furnished by the lamb of the large-tailed sheep imported from Crim-Tatary; high black Kirghiz bonnets, made of stuff resembling hair; or flat gold-figured cowls from Kasan.

The entrance to the fair is always crowded, but not with the dirty, dingy crowd of a European city. Here is sufficient material for the ethnologist to spend his time and study on for a twelvemonth or more; for if that erudite gentleman only secure a resting-place and shelter under one of the many booths skirting the entrance to the fair—no easy matter where thousands are rushing like bubbles to a whirlpool—he will look upon costumes and faces more varied and grotesque than are elsewhere assembled within so small a compass.

That white-faced, flat-nosed man is a merchant from Archangel, and comes with furs; he is followed, perchance, by a bronzed, long-eared Chinese with tea, who is again followed by a pair of lozenge-eyed Tatars from the Five Mountains; then there pass a group of youths, whose regular features bespeak the high Circassian blood, and contrast most forcibly with the appearance of those Tatar pedlars who hawk about muslins on their arms. Cossacks, freighted with hides from the Ukraine, are gazing in mute astonishment on their brethren, who have come with caviar from the Akhtuba, a river of Asiatic Russia, which, issuing from the Volga, about twelve miles above Tzaritzin, joins it again, like a dutiful offspring, on its passage to the Caspian Sea. Then there saunter past, with long robes and flowing hair, Persians bearing rich perfumes for the boudoirs and toilet-tables of the Russian grandes; while Kujurs from Astrabad—that long, narrow, sandy tongue of land which, on the north-east coast of the Crimea, encloses the western side of the Putrid Sea—and Turkomans from the northern bank of the Gaurgan follow in succession. Interspersed among the crowd, we see Bashkirs from the Ural Mountains, who seem far away in thought among the hives of their native cottages; while the stalwart Kuzilbash from Orenburg, looks as though he would rather be listening to the scream of the eagles in chase, than to the roar of this sea of human tongues.

Glancing in another direction, the spectator beholds a Greek from Moldavia dangling a rosary from his fingers, and treating about it with a Calmuck as wild

and agile as the horses amongst which he was born and bred. By their side stands a Truchman, with his neighbour, a Ghilan of Western Persia; while a Bucharian, garmented in a long coat reaching down nearly to his ankles, and girdled round the waist, is greeting with his usual thoughtless gaiety some Agriakhan acquaintance, sprung of the mixed blood of Hindoos and Tatars. Nogais are mingling with Kirghizians; and drapers from Paris are bargaining for the shawls of Cashmere with some member of an Asiatic tribe, whose name is as unpronounceable as it is long. Jews from Brody are squaring accounts with Turks from Trebizonde, and costume-painters from Berlin are walking arm-in-arm with actors, who are perhaps going to play in the evening some dark and savage scenes of tragedy or melodrama. In short, here you have, as the showman says, cotton-merchants from Manchester, jewellers from Augsburg, watchmakers from Neuchâtel, wine-merchants from Frankfort, leech-buyers from Hamburg, grocers from Königsberg, amber-dealers from Memel, pipe-makers from Dresden, and furriers from Warsaw—the whole helping to make up a crowd the most motley and singular ever assembled by the wonder-working genius of commerce. I say of commerce; for, be it remembered, that the crowd thus gathered together, as at a masquerade, has come to no holiday meeting. The ordinarily gaudy look of an English or French fair, which shews the shabbiness of its under-garments, even through the tinsel of outward decoration, is here entirely wanting. This is a place of business; and the Nishnei buyers are no country bumpkins, who, with a few shillings in their pockets, come to gape and stare, and go back again as rich as Moses with his spectacles, but real *bona-fide* merchants and bankers, who frequently invest their whole fortunes in the objects of distant commerce here put into sudden circulation.

As most of the Oriental dealers who frequent the fair belong to tribes in constant intercourse with the Russians of the south, there is not such a diversity of garb as might be expected from the variety of tongues prevalent in this modern Babel. The long kaftan of Russia, as a compromise between the loose folds of the East and the scanty skirts of Europe, is worn by the majority. There are Russians, of course, from every corner of the empire; but the greater, and certainly the most singular part of the crowd consists of dealers from a variety of tribes in Central Asia, who come to Nishnei-Novgorod as the great point of union between Europe and Asia, where the East and the West make mutual interchange of their respective commodities.

Though there is no spot in the world, perhaps, where so many different members of the habitable globe congregate, yet the one interesting addition of *woman* is almost entirely wanting. What life and cameleon-like change of shade and colouring would this scene present, were each Asiatic to bring his dark-eyed, wondering bride along with him! But such a fancy is hopeless, since Oriental jealousy forbids the bare idea of such a journey among the infidel sons of the West.

Take it, however, as it is, the fair of Nishnei-Novgorod still offers such a *tout ensemble* as would require the highest descriptive powers to do it justice. The only thing to which it can be compared in Western Europe, is the great fair of Leipzig; yet how much does that of Nishnei surpass it! At first, perhaps, there is a feeling of disappointment; but let any one who has been at Nishnei think of it twelve months or twelve years after, and say whether it is not a sight that furnishes more to meditate on than any similar scene he has ever witnessed.* Leipzig may have a

* So says Robert Bremner, to whose *Excursions in Russia* we are mainly indebted for the details of the fair of Nishnei-Novgorod.

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livelier look, owing to the great intermixture of females in the crowd, and to the fact that all the beauty of a city where beauty is not rare comes to the aid of the trading populace. The German fair gains also from being held in the picturesque, old-fashioned streets of one of the most interesting cities in Europe, which boasts of houses as lofty as those of the Old Town of Edinburgh, and is surrounded on all sides by beautiful walks and scenes of historic and literary interest. Nishnei, on the contrary, is thrust away, almost out of the world, to a spot that nobody ever heard of before—a swampy point, threatened every day in the year by the floodings of two great rivers, with nothing round it but dreary forests and endless plains of water—so vast that the eye wearies of measuring them.

Yet, in spite of all this, the fair of Nishnei is a much more marvellous sight than that of Leipzig. In place of temporary booths, filled with German toys or Tyrolean guitars, are seen substantial, well-stored shops, groaning with articles at once the most costly and the most essential to human existence. Not forgetting that the most important part of the Leipzig business is transacted in the vast magazines with which the best streets are filled, it is yet asserted by competent judges, that, take the contents of every ware-room and every booth, the goods brought to Nishnei in one year would still be found far to surpass those brought to its rival in two. Leipzig collects rarely more than 40,000 strangers; while Nishnei, as we learn from good authority, is annually frequented during the two months of the fair by the enormous number of a quarter of a million. Some have even rated the number higher, especially Exelmann, who states it at 600,000; but this is justly rejected as exaggeration. Besides differing from the German fair in its want of the fair sex, Nishnei presents another feature of distinction in the total absence of anything literary from its stores; while the fair of Leipzig is essentially a literary one, or rather the literary one of Europe.

But, ere we quit the Russian city of shops, we will just cast a cursory glance over its general features and proportions.

A sad difficulty presents itself at the very outset; for no sooner do we leave the dry bridge, and launch forth into the maze of alleys and streets, than we meet with a most decided obstacle, in the shape of what is incomparably the most abundant of all Russian commodities—*mud*. One might as well try to walk through a street of tar as through the creeping eddies which it here forms, and in which the furrows of the struggling wheels close almost immediately after they have passed. If it were not for this superabundance of dirt, the streets of Nishnei would be as good as any in Europe. They are as regular and as wide as those of the New Town of Edinburgh. Their number, as well as the magnitude of the business transacted in them, may be estimated from the fact that the rents drawn from them during the short term of the fair amount to 450,000 roubles.

To enumerate all the articles for sale here would be impossible. There is literally nothing but books wanting. From cathedral bells to ostrich feathers, every other commodity is supplied in abundance. To facilitate business, a separate quarter is allotted to each of the more important descriptions of goods. One of these quarters contains groceries, of which the value sold is very great; another contains fish and caviar exposed in most fragrant variety. No less than L.60,000 worth of these are sold annually at the fair.

A third quarter is devoted to leather articles—all of them surprisingly cheap. And here Morocco leather particularly abounds, the greater part of which comes from Astrakhan. Soap, too, from the neighbouring province of Kasan, is brought hither in large quantities. Iron from Toulou, a district south of Moscow,

and glittering arms of every description occupy a conspicuous space in the streets.

The cloth-market is also very large and well stocked; but the most curious of all is the tea-division, from the number of Chinese seen in it, and the great amount of business transacted by them. Cotton goods, wines, silks, shawls, fancy articles, furniture, mirrors, and crystals, are scattered about in the greatest profusion; and many a longing eye is turned towards the windows of the jewellers and silversmiths, who are said to do a large business, not only in selling home-made articles, but also in purchasing jewels and precious stones from Asia.

But we must now pass by the shops and their attractive contents; for an interesting sight of another kind demands our attention. Forming a species of outpost to the fair, there is a colony of carpenters and blacksmiths, whose business it is to doctor up broken-down carts and to shoe horses. Their mode of performing the latter operation is more cruel even than that practised in Germany. Outside the farrier's door, strong posts are fixed, with huge straps and pulleys attached to them. The poor horse is wheeled into this treacherous cradle, and, before he knows what is about to befall him, the straps and ropes are crossed under him, a wheel is turned, and in a moment he hangs in the air as helpless as a bale of wool. Other straps are now fastened about his flanks, so that he cannot move a limb; and his assailants, seizing hold of his foot, proceed to shoe him with as little ceremony as if he had neither heels to kick nor teeth to bite with.

The reader who has kindly accompanied us thus far through the fair, will probably have seen enough of it for one day at least. If not, however, and he is fond of such things, he may wind up the evening with the spectacle of *Othello*, performed by a copper-colour looking Russian, who rants at his 'Djesmona,' as he calls her, rolls his eyes, grumbles, and finally rushes on to the termination with appalling haste, by stabbing his gentle mate, who, as she sinks at his feet, breathes nothing in death but 'Otello! Otello!'

OUR COUSIN BEN.

It is an old proverb, and in most cases a true one, that 'the boy is the father of the man.' Yet we may not come hastily to the conclusion, that because a youth sits daily at the foot of his class, is crowned regularly with the fool's cap, and is pronounced by the master to be the dunce of the school, his future life is likely to be characterised by stolidity and indifference. There are some who have attained the first rank among men of science, letters, art, and commerce, who were stigmatised at school as downright boobies. We may, therefore, find other mirrors in which a lad's possible future is reflected, besides the opinion of his teacher, or the position he holds in his class; and there are other channels for the development of industry, ability, and disposition, than those afforded by the surface-drill of many of our elementary schools. Peer into some lumber-room or cellar of your stupid scholar's domicile, and see him constructing, out of waste pieces of wood, whale-bone, and string, ingenious locomotive carts, or aerial machines, or framing a miniature camera-obscura, and it requires but little imagination to picture him as the future engineer or philosopher whose genius will span frightful chasms, or bring unknown worlds to light. Open the slovenly little billet that is passed stealthily upwards from the foot of the class, and which, as it is perused by each scholar in succession, behind the concealing shade of an upraised book, makes his countenance quiver with half-suppressed laughter, and you may find four lines of clever satire,

the point of which is worthy of Butler's pen. Find a boy in his chosen field the playground, and you have perhaps stumbled upon one who, with considerable muscular power and physical energy, is the confidential friend of all the smaller boys in their plans, and their immediate resort in cases of danger or difficulty; who throws spirit into every game, and is full of fun, yet dislikes practical jokes, and will not stand to see any one abused: this kind of booby, you may be sure, will be in after-life a man whom everybody can trust; who will not rob the widow or the orphan to make himself rich, and whose purse will be, as his hands have been in his younger days, ready at the call of the needy. Watch the countenance of some other booby, who gets flogged at least once a day, because he will learn nothing without it, and trace, if you can, a single line or twitch of pain that indicates the least wincing under the chastisement; but notice how his face relaxes when he meets his mother's smile, and how his ready fingers fly to anticipate her wishes; and in manhood you may find him a man of iron will and stubborn resolution, who laughs at difficulties, and stands unmoved the shock of adversity; but whose life translates the motto—*ductus non coactus*.

We have just now a boy in our eye, whose career may serve to illustrate these remarks. Ben was a strange boy, a perfect puzzle to teachers and guardians, and every one who ever attempted to impose restraint on him, except his mother; she, worthy old woman, never thought of wondering at his pranks, he took so after his father, who had always a way of his own. Among his fellows at school, Ben was a lion—not that he excelled at lessons; his knowledge of grammar was barely enough to enable him to decide whether 'that' was a verb or a pronoun; and of geography, to make him confident that Australia was not a state of the Union, and that Paris was not in Central Africa; but in the 'manly exercises' of running, leaping, wrestling, boxing, and such as these, he was beyond competition the champion of the school. A 'bickering' expedition against the rival school of the village was complete if Ben was at its head. No matter what the odds were, with a dauntless 'hurrah,' his party would make their charge, and it never failed.

High, high were their hopes, for their chieftain had said That whatever men dare they can do.

Ben, from his infancy, had been a sort of amphibious animal; he could handle a boat in masterly style, and swim like a duck. Once, indeed, he had a little more of it than he just liked; when, at a couple of miles from the shore, he accidentally jerked himself out of a skiff, and remained for three long quarters of an hour in the water before he was picked up; but once safely out, what of it! He shook himself like a true water-dog, and with the conviction that he was water-tight yet, remained out of doors till he was dry, lest his mother should get nervous if she saw him as he was. Every vessel that frequented the port, Ben knew by head-mark; while yet in the offing, and ere the customs-officers, with their glasses, could make them out, Ben guessed, 'by the cut of their jib,' what they were; and seldom was he wrong. No sooner was their anchor down, than he was aboard, and after mounting to the mainmast-head, and thrice turning the vane, he set to work, and lent a willing hand in furling the sails, and putting things in trim for discharging: a pipe with the men concluded the business, and Ben came ashore. To engagements like these, school regulations opposed no available barrier; the 'taws' possessed no terrors for Ben. He had reached such an amount of experience under them, that he had begun to philosophise on the subject, and would answer to the sympathising remarks of his friends: 'Why, don't every licking I get only tan my

hands the harder for the next?' So the master began to reckon on Ben's place being vacant whenever a vessel arrived in the harbour; and though he well knew the pernicious habit to be incorrigible, yet, to satisfy his conscience, and maintain the regularity of his discipline, he never failed, on the truant's return, to administer the wonted admonition with the usual proportionate number of stripes. We believe that while this cousin of ours was at school, the master wore out upon an average two pair of taws every year; and we suspect that it was a measure of economy when, towards the close of his attendance, the amount of Ben's usual castigation was reduced by a half.

Now, no one must suppose from all this that Ben was a bad boy; those who said so did not know him. He was the kindest-hearted fellow possible, and none knew that better than we, his little cousins. Not to speak of the apples and cakes we got from him, his bat and ball, as well as his legs and fists, were ever at our service. We to the juvenile oppressor who dared to molest us! A single cry of distress brought Ben to our side, when, without the ceremony of a challenge, his double-shot strokes were sent home with powerful effect, to the utter discomfiture of the tyrant and his tyranny. Of little boys, and the weak in general, Ben was the acknowledged champion—a sort of 'village Hampden,' who thoroughly understood, and rigidly enforced the principles of juvenile civil liberty; nor was the executive power in any degree feeble. Moreover, to his mother, Ben, though occasionally wayward, was a most affectionate son; he would have gone through fire and water rather than cause her a single tear; and the mouth that ventured a word of disrespect in his hearing, was effectually sealed in a moment, and bore the impress of his signet for at least a week.

When Ben's education was finished—that is, when he had sat for a year at the foot of the highest class in the school—it was befitting that some employment should be found for him. Ben's heart was on the sea; but as his mother said she should die of a broken heart if he became a sailor, he, with a big effort, bent to her wishes, and smothered his desires. There was in the neighbouring town an uncle of his who was well to do as a merchant, and to him, in due course, Ben was apprenticed for the dreary term of five years. It was, at all events, a step in advance to be installed in a warehouse, instead of drumming away at school, and Ben began to form golden ideas of making a 'handsome thing of it before his time was out.' A little further along the vista of his imagined future, dim visions floated of his mother ensconced in an easy arm-chair, raised by his effort above the necessity of 'putting her hand to a thing,' and himself a thriving city merchant, who could count his yearly gains by hundreds at least. But Ben could not help these waking-dreams being often melted away in the water—

A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep,

was the darling hope of his heart, and even the idea of his mother's tears could not quite quench it.

To business he went; and three weary years sped their course, and found Ben still behind the counter, but thoroughly disgusted with the whole thing. The ruling passion of his soul had become apparent also to his employer, who found him perpetually scooping out or rigging up miniature frigates or other craft, for which a suitable sphere of action was readily obtained in the cistern, or, failing that, in the street gutter. His uncle became satisfied, too, that no amount of 'blowing up' would ever avail to mend the matter. 'It's no use,' as Ben said, 'trying to turn a fellow's will upside down; as well try to make him walk on his head;' and so Ben found out one day, vastly to his delight, that his uncle had at length advised his mother to try to make up her mind to allow her son to follow his

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inclination, and make a sailor of him. Poor woman! it went sorely against the grain to think of parting with her boy; but what could she do? and so the necessity of the case wrung an unwilling consent from her lips. Preparations were soon made; and a berth being obtained on board the good ship *Charlotte*, from Liverpool for Valparaiso, Ben bade his mother a kindly farewell, brushed away a tear with the sleeve of his jacket, and went regularly before the mast.

The first night out of port promised to be squally, and the vessel was not many hours at sea before orders were given to shorten sail. But where were the hands? Ah, Bacchus had fought that day and prevailed, and his victims were prostrate in their berths at his feet. The few men who were on deck being quite insufficient for the duty, the master, without further ado, armed himself with an iron belaying-pin, and, proceeding below, laid about him on each side with hearty goodwill, till, with many a groan and bellow, the bruised sleepers were herded to their task. Ben beheld in silent awe this first specimen of ship-discipline. The wagging of the dominie's taws was the mere shaking of a straw-wisp beside this wholesale infliction of the edgel, and for a moment his heart sank at the prospect of his one day getting a taste of the same sauce. Swollen heads and limping steps proved next day that the effects of the captain's drill were not transient; and for a week at least there was no possibility of forgetting it. But time at length rubbed down the sharp corners that stuck so fast in memory; and gin being really a pretty harmless thing when stowed away among ship's stores, and not likely to do much mischief except when burning people's brains, things went on smoothly after a while. But the calm was deceitful. 'When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war,' and our cousin, though not of kindred blood, was of like spirit with those who checked the Persian flood at Thermopylae, and hurled it back at Marathon. Assuredly, the captain met with his match when he entered the lists with Ben. Leaning over the vessel's side one day, performing some operation which the skipper was superintending, our hero accidentally brought his hand into rather close contiguity with the ruby nose of his master; to repay which, the latter laid the full weight of his fist upon Ben's ear. A sharp reply was made, which raised the fury of the captain beyond all bounds. He kicked the 'young dog' to the other side of the ship, and was proceeding to follow it up with something still more to the purpose, when Ben, snatching up a large double block, hurled it unceremoniously at the head of his tormentor. It only took his hat with it into the sea; but his face grew redder and his fury hotter, and,

Like mountain-cat that guards its young,

Full at Fitz-James's throat he sprang.

Ha! Ben was too nimble for him. The enraged captain had not taken two steps, when his quarry was up the shrouds, and safely lodged in the maintop, where he assumed an attitude of defiance, and stoutly declared that he would knock the first man down that approached him. The captain in vain attempted by imprecations, threats, and cajolery to draw him from his refuge; and, as a last resource, presented a loaded pistol at his head, and swore he would shoot him if he did not come down. Ben's courage for a moment nearly failed him; but, reckoning that the captain was not likely to risk his own neck for the sake of reducing an apprentice to submission, he maintained his defiant air. 'It's no use. Fire away, sir—I'll die sooner than come down!' The skipper was at his wits' end. Finding his threat fail, he again assumed a conciliatory tone; and Ben, perceiving his advantage, demanded a promise that he should be allowed to go to his work free of scath if he came down. This

the foiled captain reluctantly gave; and the young victor resumed his place before the mast, many grades higher in the estimation of his comrades, as well as in his own, but a marked man in the eyes of his vengeful master, who hoped yet to wreak his wrath upon him.

The volcano was not to be exhausted by one eruption, and a second soon broke forth. The second-mate, a young athletic man of colour, took it upon him to call Master Ben a dog; whereupon our doughty cousin, then at the age of seventeen, smarting under the insult, attacked him tooth and nail, and succeeded in knocking him down. The first-mate—with whom, by the way, Ben was a great favourite, but who, from his position, felt impelled to maintain the authority of his injured compeer—hastened to the rescue, armed with a rope's-end, and before him Ben thought fit to make good his retreat. As ill-luck would have it, the captain, at this inauspicious moment, made his appearance on deck, and, understanding how matters stood, at once relieved the mate of the duty he had assumed, by undertaking himself the vindication of offended dignity. Ben's retreat to the rigging had been cut off by the mate; and, seeing his chance of resistance to be but small, he mounted on the cat-head, and vowed to the captain, as he advanced to seize him, that the moment he reached the foremast he would throw himself into the sea, and swim for one of her majesty's frigates, then lying in the Bay of Callao, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, and having lodged a formal complaint of bad treatment, would volunteer to serve the Queen. The captain did not pause; the foremast was reached; and, with a shout of defiance, Ben leaped among the waves, and disappeared. In a minute, he was again on the surface, and striking out powerfully for the frigate. In vain the master hallooed after him to return: he was deaf to all persuasion; till at length the captain, not relishing the idea of an investigation before the consul at Callao, which might prove prejudicial to his interests at home, sent a boat after the adventurer, with the requisite pledge that all would be overlooked. He returned, then, to the ship a second time the victor, having earned a place in the captain's estimation, not from respect, but from fear. His troubles henceforth were few. On the homeward voyage, his persecutor died, and, the mate having assumed the command, Ben led an easier life for the rest of it.

The arrival in dear old England—the visit to his native village—the meeting with his mother, who never was done wondering at the growth and beauty of her boy—we must leave the reader to imagine. And then came the second sad parting, and Ben's heart beat high when he knew that his ship was to make her next voyage to golden Australia. Its temptations proved strong, and the crew to a man deserted to dig gold, leaving only the apprentices on board, while every effort to induce their return proved useless. Ben was now nearly nineteen, and his time being almost out, his friend the master promoted him to act as second-mate in the homeward voyage with his new crew. His conduct in this post told greatly in his favour with the owners; and on his return to England, Ben having passed the requisite examination, was installed as first-mate in another vessel. Another voyage of two years accomplished, and another examination passed, Ben became qualified to take the command of any foreign-going craft; and now this intractable cousin of ours is master of as fine a merchant-ship as ever doubled the Cape, and, moreover, he is fit for his post, and no tyrant. The good old schoolmaster is proud now to let people know who had the training of him; and there is not a girl in the village who would not reckon it a compliment to be thought his sweetheart. But, in confidence, there is a pretty white cottage not far from the shore, towards which Ben's heart vibrates, even when at the antipodes, as surely as the needle towards the pole: and if everything goes right, as we hope it may, the

lily that blooms beneath that humble roof will some day soon stand before the altar, and, placing her hand in a sailor's grasp, become Mrs Ben —.

DEATH-WARRANTS.

The frequent repetition of the word 'death-warrant' in accounts of the last moments of criminals under sentence of death, has fostered the belief in this legal formality; whereas, says *Lex*, in the *Times*, January 6, 1856, 'except in the case of a peer of the realm, there is no such thing as a death-warrant ever signed by the crown, or by any one or more officers of the crown; the only authority for the execution of a criminal convicted of a capital crime being the verbal sentence pronounced upon him in open court, which sentence the sheriff is bound to take cognizance of, and execute without any further authority. It is true that a written calendar of the offences and punishments of the prisoner is made out and signed by the judge, of which a copy is delivered to the sheriff; but this is only a memorandum, and not an official document; and it is optional with the judge to sign it or not.'—*Times's Things Not Generally Known*.

BREVITY OF ANCIENT SCOTCH LAWS.

Judging from our statute-book, our ancestors must have been men of few words—men fond of deeds rather than words. It is refreshing, after reading some of our complex and lengthened modern acts of parliament, to turn to a Scotch act of parliament of the reign of James I., which briefly and pithily enacts that 'nae man should enter any place where there is hay with a candle, unless it be in a lantern.' The whole of the Scotch acts of parliament passed in the reign of James I., extending over thirteen parliaments, and amounting to 133 in number, are comprehended in forty-six pages of a small duodecimo volume, and that volume contains the whole Scotch acts of parliament from 1426 to 1621, being nearly 200 years. The annual Mutiny Act of Queen Victoria, for the regulation of the army, is many times more bulky than the acts of the whole thirteen parliaments of her first royal ancestor in the Stuart line.—*Sheriff Barclay on History from the Statute-book*.

SCIENCE VERSUS CRIME.

A Berlin correspondent sends over rather a good illustration of the advantage of science when crime has to be detected. The contents of a barrel of coin had been stolen in one of the Prussian railways, and the barrel itself filled up with sand, and sent on to its destination. Professor Ehrenberg was consulted, and he sent for samples of sand from all the stations along the different lines of railways that the specie had passed, and, by means of his microscope, identified the station from which the interpolated sand must have been taken. The station once selected, it was easy, out of the small number of employees, to fix on the offender.—*London Correspondent, Inverness Courier*.

A KNOWING HORSE.

One day last week he was driven a few miles out of town, and on his return, sometime in the afternoon, was fed with meal and cut-feed as usual, but for his supper he had nothing but dry hay, which did not agree very well with his sense of right, after travelling twenty miles with a load through snow-drifts. However, he kept his thoughts to himself till we were all out of the way for the night; then, sundering his rope in some way, he passed through the cow-stable, crossed the barn-floor and the carriage-room to the granary, at the further end of the barn, some forty feet, where he had often seen us get the meal for him. He there found two bags of meal, standing by the bin, tied up tight; but the top one being too heavy for his purpose, he threw it aside; and after examining the other bag, which weighed between fifty and sixty pounds, he took it in his teeth, and carried it about twenty feet, to a clean spot on the barn-floor. Finding it difficult to untie it, he cut a hole in the side, and shook out about a peck of meal, and ate what he wished; and seeing the cow—the only companion

he has these long winter-nights—looking with a longing eye at his pile of meal, he took up the bag again, and carried it about ten feet further to her manger, and shook out some more meal for her. They were found in the morning feasting together.—*Amherst (U.S.) Express*.

FAITHFULNESS.

Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted.

Psalm.

THINK you, had we two lost fealty, something would not as I sit

With this book upon my lap here, come and overshadow it? Hide with spectral mists the pages, under each familiar leaf Lurk, and clutch my hand that turns it with the icy clutch of grief?

Think you, that were we divided—not by distance, word, or thought—

Things the world counts separation, but we smile at, better taught!—

That I should not feel the dropping of each link you did untwine,

Clear as if you sat before me with your true eyes fixed on mine?

That I should not, did you crumble, as the other women do, To the dust of mummied idols, know it without sight of you—

By a shadow darkening daylight through the false blue skies of spring,

By foul fears from household corners crawling over every-thing?

If that awful gulf were opening which makes two, however near,

Parted, more than we were parted, dwelt we in each hemisphere,

Could I sit thus, smiling quiet o'er this book beside my hand, And while earth was cloven beneath me, feel no shock, nor understand?

No—you cannot, cannot loose me! No, my faith builds safe on yours,

Rock-like; let the winds and waves come; its foundation still endures:

By a man's might—'See, I hold thee; mine thou art, and mine must be.'

By a woman's patience—'Sooner doubt I my own soul than thee.'

So, Heaven mend us! we'll together once again take counsel sweet,

Though this hand of mine drops empty, that blank wall my blank eyes meet:

Life may flow on; men may alter—ay, forsooth, and women too!—

ONE is Truth; and as He liveth, I believe in truth—and you.

SOLID SWISS PARQUETERIE.

The solid Swiss parqueterie, which is gradually becoming known in England, promises to supply a want. It is made solid throughout, and every portion of the ornamental woods forming the patterns is grooved and tongued together, and jointed with marine glue. It can thus be fixed immediately upon the joists when applied for flooring, rendering under-flooring unnecessary. This parqueterie has also the advantage of being much lower in price than the ordinary veneered work which has hitherto been in use. Being manufactured by machinery and in large quantities, a great reduction in its cost has been obtained, and it can be supplied in London at prices commencing from 1s. per foot super. It is now being laid at the house of the Turkish ambassador. It seems only right that we should make it known to our readers.—*The Builder*.

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No. 12

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